

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KABUL 05267 01 OF 02 141310Z

44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8509

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 5267

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PK, IN, AF

SUBJ: INDIRA GANDHI IN KABUL: JULY 4-7, 1976

1. SUMMARY. INDIAN PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI PAID AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO KABUL JULY 4-7. THE WARMTH OF HER RECEPTION, MEDIA COVERAGE, AND THE FAVORABLE ATMOSPHERICS SURROUNDING THE VISIT WERE GREATER THAN AFFORDED ANY OTHER FOREIGN LEADER TO VISIT AFGHANISTAN SINCE THE JULY 7, 1973 COUP WHICH ESTABLISHED THE DAOUD REGIME. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, A LACK OF CONTENT IN PUBLIC ASPECTS OF THE VISIT. NO NEW TECHNICAL OR CULTURAL AGREEMENTS WERE SIGNED, AND THE SPEECHES AND JOINT COMMUNIQUE WERE LARGELY ANODYNE AND FAMILIAR FROM PREVIOUS AFGHAN/INDIAN STATEMENTS. NOTABLE BY ITS ABSENCE WAS ANY MENTION OF PAKISTAN OR PUSHTUNISTAN. THE SUBJECT WAS TREATED BY OBLIQUE AND HOPEFUL REFERENCES TO LESSENING TENSION WITHIN THE REGION. WHILE THE VISIT

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PAGE 02 KABUL 05267 01 OF 02 141310Z

WAS SHORT ON SUBSTANCE AND LONG ON HOOPLA, ITS

IMPORTANCE SHOULD NOT BE DISCOUNTED. IT INDICATES THAT DESPITE CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES AND REDUCED REGIONAL TENSION AFGHANISTAN YILL ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO ITS INDIAN TIES. END OF SUMMARY.

2. INDIAN PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI ARRIVED IN KABUL AT 6 PM ON JULY 4 TO BE GREETED WITH MORE HOOPLA AND PUBLIC PREPARATION THAN HAS BEEN AFFORDED ANY OTHER FOREIGN LEADER SINCE THE REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN WAS FOUNDED BY COUP JULY 17, 1973. CIVIC BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS ALONG THE LINE OF PROCESSION, WHICH ORDINARILY ARE REFURBISHED ONLY HOURS PRIOR THE ANNUAL JULY 17 CELEBRATIONS, WERE INSTEAD COMPLETED HOURS BEFORE INDIRA'S ARRIVAL. ORDERLY SCHOOL CHILDREN WAVED NEW AFGHAN AND INDIAN FLAGS, POLICE REROUTED KABUL TRAFFIC AND THE SCOUTS WERE ON PARADE. PRIOR TO THE INDIAN PM'S VISIT, AFGHAN MEDIA FEATURED EXTENSIVE BACKGROUND ARTICLES ON INDIA, INDIRA, AND AFGHAN-INDIAN RELATIONS. THE VISIT ITSELF WAS A MEDIA EVENT. THE JULY 5 EDITION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE "KABUL TIMES" CARRIED NO FEWER THAN FOUR PICTURES OF INDIRA WITH DAUD ON THE FRONT PAGE. WHILE DAY-TO-DAY EVENTS OF THE VISIT MONOPOLIZED THE FRONT PAGES, INTERSTICES WERE DOUN IN INTERIOR PAGEEM FOR ARTICLES SUCH AS "HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN INDIA". HOWEVER, DESPITE OFFICIAL ARRANGEMENTS MRS GHANDI VISIT APPEARS TO HAVE GENERATED LITTLE INTEREST OR ENTHUSIASM AMONG THE POPULACE, ESPECIALLY IN COMPARISON TO PAKISTANI PM BHUTTO'S RECENT VISIT.

3. WHILE THE MESSAGE OF THE TREATMENT AFFORDED MRS GANDHI AND ENTOURAGE IS PLAIN ENOUGH, NOTHING OF GREAT IMPORT EMERGED FROM THE TEXTS OF THE SPEECHES, TOASTS, OR JOINT COMMUNIQUE. INDEED LITTLE EMERGED THAT HAD NOT BECOME STANDARD FARE DURING OTHER HIGH LEVEL AFGHSN-INDIAN EXCHANGES. IDENTITY OF VIEWS WAS CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KABUL 05267 01 OF 02 141310Z

INVOKED ON THE MIDDLE EAST, PEACE IN LEBANON, ANTI-APARTHEID, THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE, TOTAL BAN ON USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, CREATION OF A NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER, ETC. SHARED VIEWS ON THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM), WHICH HAVE ALSO BECOME ROUTINE, WERE A BIT MORE POINTED: AGREEMENT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF STRICT ADHERENCE TO NAM MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA AND A JOINT RESOLVE TO WORK TOWARD THIS END IN COLOMBO. THE VISIT DID NOT PRODUCE ANY NEW ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE OR CULTURAL

EXCHANGE AGREEMENTS, THOUGH MRS. GANDHI DID ANNOUNCE THAT A NEW WING WOULD BE ADDED TO THE INDIAN-BUILT CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSTITUTE IN KABUL AND THERE WAS PASSING COMMUNIQUE REFERENCE TO INDIA'S COOPERATING IN AFGHANISTAN'S SEVEN YEAR PLAN.

4. MORE IMPORTANT PERHAPS WAS WHAT WAS PUBLICLY MENTIONED ONLY OBLIQUELY: PAKISTAN AND PUSHTUNISTAN. MUTUAL ANTAGONISM TO PAKISTAN WAS, OF COURSE, AN IMPORTANT REASON FOR THE BETTERMENT OF AFGHAN/INDIAN RELATIONS THAT FOLLOWED DAOUD'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER, AND THIS HAS BEEN APPARENT IN STATEMENTS GENERATED DURING HIGH LEVEL TALKS BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES. WHEN DAOUD VISITED DELHI IN MARCH 1975 THE ISSUE WAS RAISED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LIFTING OF THE U.S. ARMS EMBARGO AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE "BLOODSHED IN PUSHTUNISTAN AND BALUCHISTAN". PUBLIC STATEMENTS FROM MRS. GANDHI'S JULY 4-7 KABUL VISIT REFLECTED THE GENERALLY IMPROVED RELATIONS IN THE REGION BY PUSHING THIS KIND OF CONTENTIOUS ISSUE INTO PARAGRAPHS OF VEILED REFERENCE: THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE STATES THAT DURING THEIR TALKS PRESIDENT DAOUD "EXPLAINED THAT IN KEEPING WITH THE TRADITIONAL POLICY OF PEACE AND FREINDSHIP AFGHANISTAN HAS SOUGHT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION". MRS. GANDHI "WELCOMED THIS PEACE-LOVING POLICY" AND IN TURN "EXPLAINED EFFORTS WHICH INDIA HAS TAKEN IN RECENT MONTHS WITH HER NEIGHBORS IN ORDER TO PROMOTE PEACE, STABILITY, AND COOPERATION IN SOUTH ASIA". SIMILARLY BOTH DAOUD AND GANDHI REFERRED IN BANQUET SPEECHES TO "THE SUCCESS OF RECENT POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REGION" AND MRS. GANDHI STATED IN A MESSAGE AIMED AT MORE THAN ONE CAPITAL: "HOWEVER WE DO WANT IT TO BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT FRIENDSHIP WITH ONE COUNTRY CANNOT BE AT THE COST OF ANOTHER'S". FOR HIS PART PAKISTANI P.M. BHUTTO BEAMED A GOOD WILL MESSAGE TO DAOUD DURING THE VISIT AS HE WINGED HIS WAY THROUGH AFGHAN

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 KABUL 05267 01 OF 02 141310Z

AIRSPACE ON HIS WAY TO SEE THE SHAH.

5. LOOKING JUST AT P.M. GANDHI'S KABUL VISIT ALONE, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT BENEATH THE WARMTH AND HOOPLA SURROUNDING THE OCCASION THERE WAS LITTLE BILATERAL CONTENT - AT LEAST IN THE MANIFESTATIONS PRESENTLY ACCESSIBLE. AT THE SAME TIME THERE WERE NO PUBLIC EVENTS NOR STATEMENTS THAT WOULD CHILL THE PRESENTLY HOPEFUL ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING RELAXATION OF TENSIONS WITH PAKISTAN. MOREOVER, THE IMPORT OF SUCH RED

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PAGE 01 KABUL 05267 02 OF 02 141315Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KABUL 5267

CARPET TREATMENT SHOULD NOT BE DISCOUNTED. SUCH TREATMENT WAS NOTICEABLY LACKING, FOR EXAMPLE, DURING PODGORNÝ'S DECEMBER 1975 VISIT TO KABUL.

6. THE TREATMENT AFFORDED MRS GANDHI AND THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE UNDERLYING HER VISIT STEMS FROM THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIA IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES UNDERTAKEN BY DAOUD SINCE JULY 1973. WITHIN THE REPUBLIC'S FIRST YEAR, DAOUD'S BROTHER AND PRINCIPAL FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR MOHAMMAD NAIM AND DEPFONMIN WAHEED ABDULLAH JOURNEYED TWICE TO NEW DELHI (SEPT 73, FEB 74) AND INDIAN FONMIN SINGH CAME TO KABUL (NOV 74). INDIA WAS ONE OF THE FIRST COUNTRIES CHOSEN BY PRESIDENT DAOUD FOR A STATE VISIT (MARCH 1975), AND MIN OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS CHAVAN VISITED AFGHANISTAN IN OCTOBER 1975. FOR THE FLEDGLING REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN THE VISIBLE IMPROVEMENT OF REKATIONS WITH INDIA MEANT: 1) AN AUDIENCE SYMPATHETIC TO ITS PROBLEM WITH PAKISTAN; 2) AN IMPORTANT FRIEND

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 KABUL 05267 02 OF 02 141315Z

IN THE NAM; AND 3) A SOURCE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND MILITARY TRAINING WHICH, NOT INCIDENTALLY, WAS IMPORTANT TO ADD COUNTERBALANCE TO SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE AFGHAN PASTIME OF REGULATING THE MIXTURE OF EAST AND WEST IN ITS FOREIGN RELATIONS AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

7. THE INCREASED CONFIDENCE OF THE DAOUD REGIME, ITS CHANGED ATTITUDE TOWARDS PAKISTAN, AND RECENT WELL KNOWN INITIATIVES IN THE REGION AIMED AT LESSENING TENSIONS HAVE ALL HAD THEIR IMPACT ON THESE AIMS. PROBABLY ON BOTH PRESIDENT DAOUD'S AND PM GANDHI'S CHECKLISTS WAS INSURING THAT THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAVE NOT UNDERMINED AFGHAN/ INDIAN RELATIONS OR LESSENERED THE DESIRE FOR CLOSE RELATIONS. OTHER OF AFGHANISTAN'S ORIGINAL REASONS FOR PURSUING FRIENDSHIP MAY HAVE CHANGED - THE LEVEL OF THE PRESENCE OF INDIAN TECHNICIANS, FOR EXAMPLE, MAY HAVE BECOME AN IRRITANT IN AFGHAN/INDIAN RELATIONS RATHER THAN A DESIDERATUM SINCE, WHEN IT COMES RIGHT DOWN TO IT, AFGHANS FOR REASONS OF CULTURE AND RELIGION BASICALLY HAVE LITTLE LIKING FOR INDIANS. NEVERTHELESS THE EXTREME WARMTH WITH WHICH THE AFGHANS GREETED THIS HINDU LEADER IS TESTAMENT TO THE GOA'S RECOLLECTION THAT INDIA WAS AN IMPORTANT FRIEND WHEN AFGHANISTAN FELT ITSELF IN NEED, AND THAT GOOD AFGHAN/INDIAN RELATIONS REMAIN AN IMPORTANT COUNCILOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN'S GAME OF DIPLOMACY.
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